



Shigellosis

Health Education Facts

What causes shigellosis?

Shigellosis is caused by bacteria belonging to the *Shigella* species. These are: *Shigella dysenteriae* 1, *Shigella sonnei*, *Shigella flexneri*, and *Shigella boydii*.

Who gets shigellosis?

Shigellosis affects people of all ages; however, infants and the elderly are at greater risk of disease.

How is shigellosis transmitted?

Only humans carry *Shigella*. Transmission occurs by the fecal-oral route. The usual mode of transmission is through contaminated hands that transfer the bacteria to food or water. Person-to-person transmission also may occur. Flies may transmit the disease by carrying the bacteria on their legs to food. Dogs that eat human feces may transmit the disease to people, especially children.

What are the symptoms and how soon do they appear?

The incubation period ranges from 12 to 96 hours, but may be as long as one week. Symptoms usually include bloody diarrhea accompanied by fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and painful, involuntary contractions of the anus. Severe cases can result in death. Mild and asymptomatic cases may occur. Illness is often self-limiting lasting four to seven days, occasionally up to weeks or months.

How is shigellosis diagnosed?

Shigellosis is diagnosed by culturing the stool for the bacterium. This is done through a laboratory test.

How is shigellosis treated?

Antibiotics are used to treat shigellosis and are effective in shortening the course of illness.

What can be done to prevent shigellosis?

Infection and transmission of *Shigella* can be prevented by:

- C Consuming water from a safe source.
- C Always washing hands after toileting, before preparing or serving meals, and before eating. Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds then rinse with warm running water.
- C Washing fruits and vegetables before eating.
- C Always washing hands after petting animals and changing diapers.

